

CANINE INFECTIOUS RESPIRATORY DISEASE

“CIRD”

Nothing To Sneeze At!

By Georgia Hymmen

After every National, with every breed—it happens. Dogs come down with some sort of respiratory disease frequently described with the catch all term “kennel cough”. It’s inevitable. You have a large number of dogs from various parts of the country together in one confined location for a relatively long period of time. Dogs are exposed to strains of CIRD’s they normally have never been around so have not had a chance to build immunity. Veterans and young puppies with weakened or immature immune systems are present. Dogs are present who may be carriers and present no signs of illness, or even worse, brought to the show ill. Whatever the reason, dog owners need to be familiar with CIRD and understand that not every coughing dog simply has “kennel cough”.

As with many people, I too had a blasé attitude about “kennel cough”. Simply a canine cold, I thought. And, as with human colds, it simply needs to run its course with little or no veterinary intervention and the dog would be fine. Certainly, some individuals might get pneumonia, but those dogs were far and few in between and were generally compromised in some manner. Going to dog shows was like sending the kids to school—they were certain to come down with “something” at some point but that “something” rarely was serious.

My first inkling there might be more to “kennel cough” than I thought was after the GDCA National in Arizona. A number of dogs came home and got very sick and some sadly died. There was a lot of conjecture on what it was; I don’t recall hearing if a PCR test was done to identify the disease in question.

In August 2014 CIRD hit home; unbeknown to the owner at the time, an ill dog was brought to a show. Dogs crated in close proximity to the ill dog became sick themselves. First signs were the classic “kennel cough” hacking, but the illness very quickly progressed to the dog presenting a very high fever and pneumonia. Thankfully, because the owner of the affected dog shared information to other exhibitors once she realized her dog was ill, all the dogs that became ill at the show were immediately treated (no “wait and see” attitude) and recovered fully. Sadly, there were two deaths occurring in dogs prior to the show. A PCR test was done on one of the affected dogs, but due to lab error the sample was not prepared correctly and was of no use. What seemed odd to some of us was the very short incubation period—some dogs became ill two-to-three days after contact—and how extremely fast the dogs got VERY ill. There was discussion as to whether it could be canine influenza.

Now, after the GDCA National in Huron, Ohio, a significant number of dogs have become ill with a CIRD. As with other cases, the first sign was the classic cough. Owners, breeders and exhibitors were outraged when they heard sick dogs had attended the National. It should go without saying that an ill dog should never attend a show. In fact, the AKC has a rule that addresses the issue of bringing sick or exposed dogs to a show. However, intentionally or not, it happens—and it will continue to happen.

To properly understand CIRD, dog owners need to familiarize themselves with the various diseases. Many of these diseases are “new”, having only been identified in the last decade or so. The old description “kennel cough” should be replaced by the term CIRD. Kennel cough itself is a disease (bordetella) but it seems now any dog that is coughing is classified as that. JP Yousha kindly several links on CIRD and it would be strongly suggested owners, breeders and handlers read them. It will give you valuable insight on the various diseases and their incubation period. I myself did not realize that a dog can start off with kennel cough and then end up with some other CIRD after the kennel cough had weakened the dog’s respiratory system. And I did not know that one of the diseases was contagious before the dog showed any symptoms. Nor did I realize non-CIRD’s like canine herpes can cause a cough. The links help provide understanding on CIRD and offer vaccine and prevention protocol.

I think one of the biggest challenges is making sure the owner who has never had a dog with CIRD recognizes what is going on when the first signs present themselves. All too frequently, the deep hacking cough is not recognized for what it is. Many owners unfamiliar with CIRD think the dog is gagging, choking, or had something caught in their throat. While experienced dog owners recognize the cough and immediately take action, new people may wait several days before taking appropriate action (veterinary card and confinement). Certainly, not every cough is a CIRD but it should go without saying ANY dog exhibiting ANY cough should be examined by a veterinarian. Whether it be a CIRD, a problem with tonsils or any other reason, the dog will most likely need treatment.

Whether it’s plain “kennel cough” or some other CIRD, ***prompt*** action should be taken to assure the health of the dog and that of others. The affected dog should be examined by a veterinarian and monitored carefully and if there is any rise in temperature or a decline in health, the vet should immediately be contacted. The dog in question should be confined through the incubation period to prevent exposing other dogs. Households with multiple dogs may find all in the household get ill—even if an exposed dog does not get ill, it should be confined until the incubation period is over. If a dog who attended a show becomes ill, information should be immediately shared with the other exhibitors so they can be prepared if their dogs fall ill. If multiple dogs become ill, a PCR test should be done to determine what they are dealing with. Again, the links provided give information on the PCR test. Also, should a dog die of the disease, there is protocol for your veterinarian to follow regarding preservation of samples.

Many owners think if their dog has had “kennel cough” (bordetella) vaccine, they are immune to CIRD. That is incorrect. As with the human flu, there are various strains, and the vaccine hopefully will protect against the most common ones. A bordetella vaccine does NOT protect against canine influenza or other CIRD’s. However, in one of the articles, it was shown that vaccinated dogs, if affected with true kennel cough, have milder cases.

In closing—life is a risk. Those of us who show ARE going to have our dogs exposed to diseases. But, so are those who take their dogs to dog parks, day care and boarding facilities. The bottom line is, make sure your dogs are properly vaccinated, in good health with a healthy immune system, use good kennel

management and operate on your own comfort level. If you are concerned about your dog getting sick at a show, simply do not enter. And, if your dog becomes ill, of course do not bring your dog, but also do NOT bring any exposed kennel mates to the show.

To all of those who had dogs become sick at the National, I wish them a speedy recovery.

Thank you to JP Yousha for sending the following links about CIRDC and vaccinations.

Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Information

https://www.zoetis.com/products/pages/bronchicine/pdf/cird_technical_bulletin.pdf

<http://www.vetinfo.com/canine-infectious-respiratory-disease.html>

http://www.akcchf.org/assets/files/Cohn-CIRD_Editorial-Review.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/canine/?mobile=nocontent>

Canine Flu Information

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/canine-influenza-virus/canine-flu>

<http://www.doginfluenza.com/>

PCR Testing Information

<https://www.idexx.com/smallanimal/reference-laboratories/testmenu/innovative-tests/real-pcr.html>

Vaccination Protocol

http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vmth/small_animal/internal_medicine/newsletters/vaccination_protocols.cfm

Kennel Cough (Bordetella)

http://m.petmd.com/dog/general-health/evr_dg_kennel_cough_an_indepth_look